



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

Behavioral Healthcare Providers from across the State Participate in Rhode Island National Guard Training

**Governor Lincoln Chafee, Major General Kevin McBride, SAMHSA's Regional
Administrator A. Kathryn Power and RI Department of Behavioral Healthcare,
Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals Director Craig Stenning Spoke at the Opening of
the Event**

Cranston, RI – Behavioral healthcare workers from the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH), along with behavioral healthcare service providers and recovery coaches across Rhode Island, spending Thursday, May 10 and Friday, May 11 training with the Rhode Island National Guard at Camp Fogarty on South County Trail in East Greenwich.

Following platoon assignments, Governor Lincoln Chafee, Commanding General of the RI National Guard Major General Kevin McBride, A. Kathryn Power, Regional Director (Region 1) of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and BHDDH Director Craig Stenning provided opening remarks. Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse visited at different times during the training.

Attendees are experiencing parts of military life, including fire arm and repelling tower training, a simulated humvee rollover, and physical training. Program participants are also attending classes on issues directly related to behavioral health, such as substance use disorders and the military, military culture, and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) issues unique to soldiers. Servicemen and women shared their stories about deployment, and military family members talked about their experiences before, during and after the deployment of loved ones.

"Operation Immersion is an outstanding opportunity for behavioral healthcare providers and recovery coaches from across Rhode Island to get an in-depth view of the challenges faced by our servicemen and women," said Governor Lincoln Chafee. "These brave Rhode Islanders sacrifice so much on our behalf – we owe it to them to have as thorough an understanding possible of their unique needs."

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“The Rhode Island National Guard considers its Service Members its most important asset”, noted Major General Kevin McBride, Adjutant General of Rhode Island and Commanding General of the Rhode Island National Guard. “Our commitment to their well-being has always been a priority. It is essential that community-based care providers have a clear understanding of the unique challenges facing our citizen soldiers.”

The event, named Operation Immersion II, is co-hosted by BHDDH and the Rhode Island National Guard. Over 55 people are expected to attend.

“We appreciate the efforts of the Rhode Island National Guard to share some of their daily routines and some of their unique experiences of military life,” said Craig Stenning, Director of BHDDH. “We at BHDDH want to establish a system of support – providers who are well-trained to help National Guard members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. These men and women risk their lives, and while deployed, deal with so many issues overseas and at home.”

About the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

SAMHSA is a public health agency within the Department of Health and Human Services. Its mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America’s communities.

About the Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals.

BHDDH is committed to assuring access to quality services and support for Rhode Islanders with developmental disabilities, mental health and substance abuse issues and chronic, long-term medical and psychiatric conditions. In addition to planning for the development of new services and prevention activities, the department’s mission includes addressing the stigma attached to these disabilities.

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